WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 APRIL 1996

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

Photos by Grace Shackman

New Harmony, Indiana near the southwest corner of the state was the site of two Utopian communities from 1814-27, first the Rappites, then the Owenites. The Owenites remodeled a simple Rappite dormitory into an opera house (right). The opera house, later used as a gas station, has been restored. See story page 2.

KAREN'S COLUMN
OF CANDLES, LANTERNS AND ELECTRICAL WORK; OF BRAINSTORMING SESSION SATURDAY APRIL 27

Right now we are taking a more historical approach to lighting than we would like at the Museum on Main Street. Candles and lanterns for illumination would have been the only choices in the 1830s for the Kellogg's, the builders of our house. At present, these seem to be our only options also!

We are trying to get the electrical work accomplished. While candles and lanterns might be simpler, they just won't do the job in the 1990s. Rob Turner of Turner Electric had taken our plans and estimated the cost for labor, materials and light fixtures.

Although we were told originally that the Plumbers and Mechanical Contractors Association of Washtenaw County, Inc. would provide all of this at no charge, we are now learning that the labor costs represent a larger donation than they are willing to make at this time.

Area electricians are all extremely busy. Although we are happy for them and realize that this is a good thing and a sign of a healthy economy, it is NOT good news for us as far as getting electricians into the house to wire it!

We can appreciate how difficult it would be to divert electricians from a paying job to one for which they would be donating their time.

Instead of waiting for the next economic downturn it looks like the only way to get this work going will be to pay part of the labor costs. The association will donate the materials needed.

Lighting fixtures may become our responsibility. Doug Kelley is looking into seeking a grant from a likely foundation to cover these additional expenses.

Laura McNab, the Educational Coordinator hired with the $5,000 grant we received from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, is organizing a brain-storm-

(continued on page 3)

WCHS ASKED TO DO TIME CAPSULE FOR BUILDING

WCHS has been given the honor of filling a time capsule to be placed in the new Vlasic Building at the northwest corner of South Main and West William Streets.

The building, to be dedicated in early May, occupies the site of the former home of William S. Maynard, a mover and shaker in Ann Arbor in the mid-19th century.

The sealed capsule is to be placed in the lobby in public view.

The WCHS committee is seeking suggestions and contributions to fill it appropriately. Suggestions to date range from letters from the mayor and University of Michigan president to their counterparts in 2100 to maps and local picture books.

Committee members are Patricia Austin, Judy Chrisman , Pam Newhouse, Karen Simpson, Jay Snyder, Pauline Walters, Esther Warzynski and Susan Wineberg, chair.

MRS. STENECK'S TOPIC: LIVES OF U-M FACULTY WIVES IN MID-1800S

Dr. Margaret S. Steneck, historian at the University of Michigan, will present a lecture on the activities and lives of University of Michigan faculty wives of the mid-19th century at the next WCHS meeting.

It will be at 2 p.m. Sunday, April 21, in the 1848 Silas Douglass house, 502 East Huron, next to the First Baptist Church which now owns the house and uses it as a student center.,

Mid-19th century faculty wives may well have met in the Gothic Revival style house because Silas Douglass was a U-M professor of chemistry and twice mayor of Ann Arbor. He and his wife, Helen, raised seven children and lived out their lives there.

Parking available in church lot, also Liberty Square structure across Washington Street (free on Sunday) and on Huron Street on Sunday.

WCHS HAS 65% OF KNAPP'S POINTS TOWARD NEW GOAL

WCHS has now collected 11,659 Bill Knapp's Restaurant points toward more acid-free materials to safely store textiles. That is 65% of our goal of 17,860 points.

Anyone who eats at Knapp's may request a yellow points slip from the cashier each time. One point is given for each dollar spent. Please give or send to Alice Ziegler, 537 Riverview Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

ANNUAL MEETING MAY 15

WCHS will celebrate the 200th birthday of Ann Arbor founder, John Allen, at its annual potluck dinner meeting at 6 p.m. Wednesday, May 15, at Dixboro Methodist Church Hall. Professor Russell Bidlack will give a talk about Allen.

CERTIFICATES OFFERED

Hand lettered certificates are offered free of charge, framed if desired, by WCHS to organizations, businesses, schools, etc... for milestone anniversaries. Information: 663-8826.

TWO-PART PROGRAM:

OF JEFFERSON'S GARDEN; OF UTOPIA ON THE WABASH

Instead of hearing about the first plant nursery in Michigan the WCHS March audience heard about Thomas Jefferson's gardens and two 19th century Utopian communities in New Harmony, Indiana.

Mary Culver, who was to be the speaker, became ill and Grace Shackman, who has spoken to us previously, substituted on short notice with some slides from a couple of her trips. She also displayed books about her subjects.

"Thomas Jefferson was easily my favorite president—he was interested in so many things. One was flowers and gardens," Grace said.

"During his lifetime [1743-1826] was a very interesting time for gardens because new settlers to this country didn't know about plants that natively grew here and they didn't know what European plants would grow here.

"There were quite a few early researchers. Jefferson was always trying to find out all he could about plants and he would try different plants in his garden."

"He introduced new plants to Virginia and carried on a kind of experimental garden. His friend, Andre Thouin, superintendent of the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, sent him seeds and exotic plants from Europe," according to *Thomas Jefferson's Flower Garden at Monticello*, one of the books on display.

Jefferson also obtained plants and seeds from Bernard McMahon, a Philadelphia nurseryman and author of the classic *American Gardener's Calendar, 1806*, described as Jefferson's horticultural "Bible," according to a newsletter of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants.

McMahon, who published the first seed catalogue in the United States, also served as curator of the plants gathered by the Lewis and Clark expedition, the newsletter said.

"Jefferson wasn't at Monticello all the time, Grace said. "He was back and forth to Philadelphia and Washington. He was always writing letters home, telling them what to plant and asking how things were coming."

She showed slides of trees and flowers she saw on her tour around Monticello in June, starting with the woods where he planted unusual kinds of trees, and including vegetable garden and wine grapes.

"He was real interested in wine. I have a book about his trips in France and other European countries to find out about different vineyards.

"He built a small building near the garden where he could just sit and look around. It has been reconstructed.

"He grew all kinds of vegetables and did very well with them. In the recreated garden of today some of the vegetables are original varieties, others are similar to what he would have grown.

"He had a contest with neighbors to see who could grow peas the fastest. He usually won because he had the southern exposure.

"I read somewhere that Jefferson worked in the garden as long as half an hour at a time so he really didn't do the major upkeep.

Thomas Jefferson's home, Monticello, in Virginia as seen from one of the restored flower beds.

"I remember years ago when I was on the Cobblestone Farm Board that we had a heritage garden that the late Sandy Hicks started.

"She ordered a lot of her seeds from the Thomas Jefferson Gardens. They were one of the first to try to recreate old gardens.

"The flower gardens around Jefferson's house were designed so he could look out the windows and see the flowers. He died in 1826 and then for more than 100 years the gardens just sort of faded away.

"The Garden Club of Virginia reconstructed the gardens in 1939-41. Some plants had naturalized and were still growing there but most died out.

"The Garden Club did a lot of research figuring out what he grew and, wherever possible, got genuine kinds of plants.

"They had a lot of fun trying to put the gardens back together. They figured out where the flower beds had been by shining auto headlights at night to see where the land rose (for raised beds).

"Jefferson grew imported plants, he grew wildflowers. One plant was given his name, *Jeffersonia diphylla*. It's a little white wild flower, commonly called Twinleaf, that bloomed about the time of his birthday, April 13. It resembles bloodroot.

A couple of years ago Grace and her husband decided they should know more about nearby states and took a trip through Indiana. They were fascinated by New Harmony down in the southwest corner of the state.

"New Harmony was the site of a Utopian community from 1814-1827, actually two Utopian communities, one religious, one more intellectual."

She showed a picture of Main Street today. "I don't think it would be much of a town today except they recreated New Harmony. Most stores are antique stores or restaurants."

"The community was started in 1814 by a group of Germans from the same part of Germany as the Germans of Ann Arbor's Old West Side. They came to America so they could practice their religion without anyone bothering them.

"They had a spiritual leader, George Rapp, and he had a lieutenant, really a business manager, named Fred Reichert. Fred became the adopted son of Rapp.

"They first came to Pennsylvania. After a few years they decided to move west because they thought they would be in a good position to trade where the people were.

"They bought the land in New Harmony and first built log cabins to live in. Then they built dormitories and houses. They had sort of prefabricated houses, all built the same.

"They knew what materials they needed. They cut the boards to fit exactly, they put together parts on the ground and lifted them up to place.

"New Harmony was supposed to be an equal community. They gave houses to people according to need.

"Later they made bricks on the property and made brick houses of the same design.

"Of course they had to have a church. First they had a wooden church. Then they built a brick church in the shape of a Greek cross. Years later some of the early settlers came back and saw the church was being used for a meat processing factory so they bought it and took it down. It's now an open field with a historical marker.

"The Rappites didn't believe in having headstones in their cemetery. They buried people with little ceremony in plain caskets in unmarked graves.. The wall around the cemetery is made of bricks from the old church.

"The Rappites had all kinds of industry—they had silk worms, they made rope and textiles, they made every kind of agricultural product you could imagine. They had blacksmiths, carpenters, a cooper shop.

"Like the Old West Side, it seemed like everybody was very good at doing things. It was a very practical community, very self-sufficient. They sold stuff in 20 states.

"But after ten years they moved back to Pennsylvania for two reasons:

"1. They thought people would be moving west faster. They found they were selling stuff mainly back east and they might as well be where their markets were.

"2. Mr. Rapp thought if he could keep everybody busy it would be better for the community so starting a new community was a way to do that. They moved back to a new community they called Economy [west of Pittsburgh].

"They put New Harmony on the market and sold it to Robert Owen. Owen ran a Utopian textile mill in Scotland. He treated his employees very nicely and made money to boot.

"Owen was an idealist and he wanted to try out his ideas in the new world. Here was a community for sale complete with houses and factories and fields.

"He bought it. with a partner, William Maclure, a scientist who lived in Philadelphia. They recruited a lot of their friends to live at New Harmony. When a number of them arrived at New Harmony in the same boat someone called it a 'Boatload of Knowledge.' "

Owen's partner, Maclure, has been called the "father of American geology" according to *New Harmony, Indiana: Robert Owen's Seedbed for Utopia*. Maclure was president of the Academy of Natural Science in Philadelphia from 1817 until his death in 1840.

Thomas Say, entomologist, and Charles Alexandre Lesueur, ichthyologist, were among those in the 'Boatload of Knowledge,' Say has been called "the father of American zoology." Though unfinished, Lesueuer's work was launched from the New Harmony press.

RAPPITES FROM SWABIA LIKE LOCAL GERMANS

The Rappites of New Harmony, Indiana, came from the same part of Germany--Wurttemberg or Swabia--as Washtenaw's Germans of Ann Arbor's Old West Side and elsewhere in the county.

But unlike Washtenaw's Germans, the Rappites were pietists or separatists from the Lutheran Church with ideas somewhat akin to communities in Zoar, Ohio, and the Amana Colonies, according to *New Harmony's First Utopians*, by Donald E. Pitzer and Josephine M. Elliott. Not more than 1,200 persons became residents of one of Rapp's three towns, the book says.

"The Owenites all believed in the educational theories of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, a Swiss reformer in the field of education. They had one of the first kindergartens in the country and they did a lot of scientific research.

"The Owenite community only lasted three years because they didn't get along with each other and because Owen gave an open invitation to anyone who wanted to join them.

"All kinds of people came in who didn't expect to work too hard. They had nothing like the work ethic or skills that the Rappites had.

Restored Rappite log cabins at New Harmony, Indiana.

"While within three years the Owenite community was no longer a community, still a lot of people stayed around. It could be argued they left a more lasting impression on Indiana than the Rappites who went back to Pennsylvania and eventually died out.

"The Owenites catalogued plants and native fauna. One of Owen's sons, Robert Dale Owen, became active in politics, was in the state legislature and Congress and helped set up the Smithsonian Institution.

David Dale Owen, another son, made Indiana's initial geological survey in 1837-38 and later made surveys in several other states and for the United States. A brother, Richard, also did geological surveying in Indiana and from 1864-79 he was a professor of natural science at Indiana University.

Another brother, William Owen, although mostly interested in business edited the New Harmony Gazette for a while. A sister, Jane Dale Owen, married Robert Henry Fauntleroy, a Virginia scientist and engineer. In their home in New Harmony in 1859 their daughter, Constance, and others founded the Minerva Society, one of the earliest literary societies for women.

"The scholarly research and publications by Maclure and other scientists associated with the model community doubtless exceeded that from all Indiana colleges and universities prior to the Civil War," Donald F. Carmony and Josephine H. Elliott write in Seedbed for Utopia.

"There is not a lot of physical evidence of the Owenites three years in New Harmony," Grace said. She showed a picture of Maclure's house built in New Harmony after the community broke up.

"Maclure brought back a golden rain tree from Mexico that is still there in the front yard. [Jefferson also had one or more golden rain trees.]

"The Rappites had a lot of music. The Owenites were even more into culture. The Owenites built an opera house from one of the Rappites dormitories. In later years it was turned into a gas station but now it has been restored back to an opera house."

She showed the Rappite granary building which they also called the fort although they never were attacked by Indians or never had to protect themselves. In later years one of the Owen's sons used it for a scientific laboratory.

"The cemetery from the Owenite years had headstones unlike the Rappites."

KAREN'S COLUMN (continued)

ing session on Saturday, April 27 for those interested in generating ideas for ways the Historical Society might cooperate with schools and community groups in the county.

The goal will be to develop plans for other programs like the two traveling exhibits we already have, using our resources of artifacts and the expertise of members.

Those attending the meeting will be drawn from her contacts in the schools, primarily history, social studies or elementary classroom teachers. If anyone reading this would be interested in coming to this *"idea"* session, please call WCHS at 662-9092, or Laura at 313-699-8515 or myself.

It will be held at O'Neal Construction, 525 West William, Ann Arbor from 10 a.m.-noon, Saturday, April 27.

From this meeting Laura hopes to identify a smaller group to serve as an Advisory Committee to guide WCHS in developing programs that would be of interest and use to the schools, now and after the museum is open.

Karen O'Neal, 665-2242

AROUND THE COUNTY

Chelsea Historical Society: 7:30 p.m. second Monday at depot, North Main at railroad.

Dexter Society: 8 p.m. first Thursday at museum, 3443 Inverness.

Manchester Society: 7:30 p.m. third Tuesday at Blacksmith Shop, 324 East Main.

Milan Society: 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday at Hack House, 775 County Street. Programs featuring local talent and businesses.

Salem Society: 7:30 p.m. fourth Thursday in Town Hall. April 25, member Cynthia Brautigan, "A History of Garden Herbs."

Saline Society: 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday at Depot Museum, 401 North Ann Arbor Street. April 17, Architect Richard Frank, "Living In and Caring for 'The Old House.'" The Depot Museum is open Saturdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Webster Society: Leave 10 a.m. Saturday, May 18, to visit Ella Sharp museum in Jackson and have lunch. Information: Gloria Brigham, 426-4892.

Ypsilanti Society: Steve Grose will evaluate carry-in antiques from 1:30-4 p.m. Sunday, April 21, at the Museum, 220 North Huron street. The fee will be a donation to the museum. Refreshments free.

Reception at museum for teachers Friday, May 3, 3:30-5:30 p.m.

MARY E. FOSTER MADE A NAME FOR HERSELF IN 19TH CENTURY ANN ARBOR; AWARD COMMEMORATES IT

The local women lawyers organization recently presented the Mary E. Foster Award to Washtenaw County Circuit Judge Melinda Morris.

Who was Mary E. Foster? She was a remarkable 19th century woman of Washtenaw County who was a practicing attorney and active in the community affairs and causes of her day.

She came to her professional career late in life. Born in 1825, she entered "the law department" of the University of Michigan in 1874 at age 49, four years after the first women students were admitted by the University.

In addition to law she "studied extensively in the literary and chemical departments," according to Chapman's *Washtenaw County History, 1881*.

"She graduated with high honors in the spring of 1876 and the following October opened a law office at her residence on Catherine Street."

She was a member of the Michigan and Washtenaw County Pioneer Societies, a life member of the Michigan State Horticultural Society, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Women's Foreign Missionary Society and the Methodist Episcopal Church where she taught Sunday School.

"In 1878 she took a trip to Europe and "spent a few months visiting the larger and more interesting cities of the old world, taking special interest in the various noted art galleries.

"In 1879 she presented a paper before the state pioneer society in 'Representative Hall, Lansing.'

"In the summer of 1880 she delivered a lecture to the Women's Missionary Society in Springfield, Illinois.

All this was after she had lost three husbands. Her third husband, William G. Foster died August 12,1873, a year before she entered law school.

She had come to Washtenaw County in 1826 from New York with her parents when she was a year old. They settled first in Pittsfield Township, then on Lodi Plains.

Mary first married Oliver B. Kellogg in 1843 and he died two years later. In 1847 she married Hugh Downey of Saline. Chapman does not tell us Mr. Downey's fate but says she was married to Mr. Foster April 2, 1863.

It would seem she was well qualified to speak when she addressed the County Pioneer Society in 1877 on the topic, *"Life."*

FUND RAISER CANCELED

The WCHS spring fund raiser which had been planned Friday, May 3 has been canceled because the expected costs would be too high to make it profitable. The Society will plan a fall fund raiser instead.

'WHAT IS IT?' GAME OFFERED SCHOOLS, GROUPS

WCHS offers traveling exhibits of small artifacts, set up as a humorous "What is it?" game, to schools for children and another for adults. They are available for classes and meetings. Information: Arlene Schmid, 665-8773.

SLATE OF NOMINEES FOR 1996-97

The nominating committee reports that all this year's officers have agreed to serve for another year and four elective board members have agreed to accept another three year term.

The slate includes Susan Wineberg, president; Ina Hanel, vice-president; Judy Chrisman, recording secretary; Caroline Mohai, corresponding secretary; Pauline Walters, assistant corresponding secretary; Patty Creal, treasurer; and Alice Ziegler, editor of *Washtenaw Impressions.*

Board members whose terms expire this spring are Arthur French, Nancy McKinney, Karen O'Neal and Peter Rocco.

The nominating committee members are Art French, chair, Rosemarion Blake, Patty Creal, and Pauline Walters.

BROWN BAG LECTURES SET

Brown bag lunch lectures are planned at noon Wednesdays at Kempf House through May 15. Admission, $1, includes coffee or tea.

April 17: Peggy Haines, "*Finding Information in the County Registrar of Deeds Records."*

April 24: Cedric Richner, *"A German Family in Ann Arbor."*

May 1: Lisa Lava-Kellar, *"Food for the Underground Railroad."*

May 8: Dr. Norman Tyler, *"A Study of the Hamlets of Cherry Hill and Dundee, Michigan."*

May 15: Rob Schweitzer, *"Historic Paint Colors and Schemes."*

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WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"FACULTY WIVES LIVES IN 1800S"

2:00 P.M. • SUNDAY APRIL 21, 1996

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